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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF

HENRY M. JACKSON  
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON  
JACOB K. JAVITS

SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
AND

CHARLES A. VANIK  
REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

THE BRIEFING ROOM

10:46 A.M. EDT

SENATOR JACKSON: We have reached what I think is an historic understanding in the area of human rights. It is a small step, but I believe indeed a major step, in man's age old quest for human freedom. And, I may say that these negotiations have been going on for two years, but as a result of a real bipartisan effort, we have been able to reach that understanding.

I have nothing but praise for Senator Javits, Senator Ribbicoff and Charlie Vanik for their roles.

President Ford deserves great credit for his leadership and his determination to get an agreement, as does the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.

Basically, the agreement lays the groundwork in an exchange of correspondence for an end of harassment as it pertains to those who desire to lead. In terms of numbers, we have identified as a benchmark and not as a quota 60,000 immigrants each year.

I want to emphasize that that is not tied to a specific number, but tied to a corresponding of the number of applicants that are received for visas, and I anticipate that it should go beyond 60,000 based on the number of applications which we know exceed 130,000.

Finally, the third point is that we have agreed on a legislative program which will make it possible for the President to waive the act, and in order to waive it, there must be compliance in accordance with the exchange of letters dealing with harassment and the movement of people from the Soviet Union.

Senator Javits.

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SENATOR JAVITS: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to -- and perhaps I am in the best position to -- pay my tribute to the brilliant initiative which began this whole effort in the so-called Jackson amendment, which rallied three-quarters of the Senate and two-thirds of the House, and the House action did its part in passing the amendment under the gifted guidance of Charlie Vanik and Wilbur Mills, and also to really pay great tribute to the extraordinary statesmanship which we have learned to expect from the Secretary of State and the wonderful spirit of cooperation and absolute determination to come to an agreement, if humanly possibly, by the President.

It is most gratifying and makes one very proud to be in the Senate and to be an American.

As to the issue itself, it has two great lessons. One, it teaches that our country has the moral determination to see that we don't live by bread alone, and that the deep issue of human rights which was involved here is satisfactorily settled, and no effort to shake the support for the Jackson amendment in terms of getting the trade bill was possible.

And the only course, therefore, was to deal with the Jackson amendment, and that is a great tribute to the deep moral feeling of our country and its deep commitment to human rights.

Secondly, the road is cleared for the trade bill, a monumental effort on the part of the United States, having a critical effect to dampen down inflation and to improve the commerce of the world as well as the good relations of the world and to help -- and if it can legitimately do so, certainly I am very pleased with that -- the progress of detente with the Soviet Union, but not at the expense of the moral issue involved.

Finally, gentlemen, the one thing I am sure Senator Jackson would wish me to point out; and that is, there is written into these letters one flat belief, and that is at the bottom of page 1, where it says -- this is addressed to Senator Jackson -- "Finally, it will be our assumption that with the application of the criteria, practices, and procedures set forth in the letter, the rate of emigration from the USSR would begin to rise promptly from the 1973 level and would continue to rise to correspond to the number of applicants."

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The importance of that is because emigration has materially diminished while these negotiations have been going on as against 1973, and we have a right to look forward, therefore, to the fact that this paragraph will be operative precisely because the restraints and the harassment which have been widely condemned by the whole world will be taken off.

Personally, I believe it is one of the really great developments in human rights and in relations between ourselves and the Soviet Union.

SENATOR JACKSON: Charlie Vanik, who did the real leadership job in the House, and it was the leadership of Charlie Vanik with Wilbur Mills that made it possible to pass it in the House four to one.

CONGRESSMAN VANIK: Senator, I just want to concur in what Senator Javits has said about the fine leadership that Senator Jackson has given on this issue, he and his staff, and the cooperation of the President and Dr. Kissinger and just want to say that on behalf of 289 cosponsors of this legislation in the House, I feel very happy that we have reached this point.

I am very hopeful and expect that there will be concurrence in this development in the House, and I hope we can move on very, very quickly to the adoption of a very important landmark piece of legislation by way of the trade bill, and I certainly think that with this respect that we have in this settlement with respect to humanity and human rights, that we have cleared the way for action in both Houses of the Congress.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Charlie.

May I just say, the initiative taken in the House, of course, laid the groundwork for more effective action in our negotiations, and I would want to point out that for a long time we have met with the Secretary of State, that is, Senator Ribbicoff, who, due to a totally conflicting engagement couldn't be here, and Senator Javits and I have met with the President and with the Secretary of State to hammer out what you have before you, and Senator Ribicoff and Senator Javits were of tremendous help on all of this.

It was an effort, a joint effort, may I say, in which there was give and take on the part of our side, and the President and the Secretary of State.

Now, any questions.

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Q When did the last piece fall into place, and what was that last piece?

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, this morning, which was just a minor matter on the legislative procedure changing the time in one instance from 60 days to 45, and 90 to 60 -- it was a technical change -- it fell into place, I would say, about ten days ago, in that the letter arrangement was worked out in final form.

We have been struggling with the details of the President's waiver authority and our authority in the form of adequate safeguards to take whatever action might be appropriate in the event that we did not agree with the findings of the President.

We hope -- and I think I can speak for my colleagues -- that this program, this pioneering effort, will work, and it is historic in that sense.

Two years ago, even up until recently, people said it couldn't be done. It has been accomplished today, and I hope that we will be able, after the 18-month period, which is contained in your statement, that we can offer an affirmative concurrent resolution in support of the extension of the President's authority.

Therefore, we look to the President and the Secretary of State to follow through on the good faith provisions that can't be spelled out in detail, but we all know what they are.

Q Just a follow-up question on that. When you speak to the last piece falling into place, is this in reference to the two-letter exchange --

SENATOR JACKSON: No, no, just on how we implement the two letters, legislatively.

Q But how about the business of what happens when 18 months expires?

SENATOR JACKSON: No, that part of it is just minor technical changes. We reached an accord basically last night at about 8:15, and there was one item left which we worked out this morning with the President and the Secretary of State.

Charlie represented the House view on it, and Senator Javits and I, and Senator Ribicoff the Senate view. It is a procedural problem, and it is hardly newsworthy.

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Q Was that here, Senator?

SENATOR JACKSON: The staffs were working last evening with the White House staff, our staffs and the White House staff.

Q Senator, could I discuss, to what extent this is a departure in Congressional procedure in relations between the Congress and the Executive Branch in giving Congress this degree of authority in reviewing the legislation and the extent to which it is carried out?

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SENATOR JACKSON: Well, first of all, it is a departure in many respects, but we followed patterns that had been adopted in the past. It is historic in that an agreement of this kind affecting human rights has never before been worked out on the basis of a trade agreement.

And secondly, it is true bipartisanship in that the President and the Secretary of State have agreed to share a responsibility regarding the carrying out of the provisions of this act.

And on those two grounds, I would say it is historic. And I think it is, shall I say, in the tradition of a great Senator, Senator Vandenberg from President Ford's home State. And I think that is what the American people expect of us now, and if we could also extend that area into the economic realm of bipartisanship while we are in such serious economic trouble, we will be, I think, carrying out the wishes of Democrats, Republicans and Independents.

Q What exactly did the Russians agree to?

SENATOR JACKSON: We did not have -- that is on the legislative side -- an agreement with the Russians. But we have the assurances of the Secretary of State and the President of the United States that they will do what is contained in the letters.

They have had their own private discussions with the Soviet leadership and the assurances given to us obviously are based on understandings that we don't have the details regarding what the Russians will do.

SENATOR JAVITS: I think that is the key question in this whole matter, and in my judgment, what we have is the commitment of the President of the United States and the Secretary of State which extends not only to trade but to all negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, that a key element of detente and all its manifestations will be the good faith performance of this agreement. And we are confident that the President and the Secretary of State fully intend to handle the matter that way, and that that is a much better commitment than any other commitment we could get.

Q Senator Jackson, who takes the initiative in renewing the 18-month waiver?

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SENATOR JACKSON: The President.

Q The President has to?

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, just so you understand, we have an 18-month trial period here and the President, 30 days before the expiration of the 18 months, will request of the Congress an extension of the authority. And then we have 60 days in which to pass a concurrent resolution.

And then if we haven't acted, we have authority in 45 days to pass a one-House veto, that is either House could veto the authority, and then each year thereafter there will be an annual request to the Congress, and it will stay in effect unless we, by a one-House veto, within 60 days, shall revoke the authority given to the President.

Q A clarification on that: In other words, on the first renewal, the President has 30 days before the expiration to ask for renewal. Then the Congress has 60 days to pass a concurrent affirmative resolution.

If it does not pass a concurrent resolution, you have an additional 45 days for one House, so it is a total of 105 days.

SENATOR JAVITS: In the meantime, the arrangement remains in effect.

Q It remains in effect until one House of Congress takes it away?

SENATOR JAVITS: Not until; it remains for 45 days. If neither House acts negatively, then it continues to ensue for one more year when the President again requests and we can again have a one-House veto.

SENATOR JACKSON: The main distinction is in the initial period. It requires a concurrent resolution at the end of the 18-month period. And if they don't act, we have a second option. If the House and Senate do not act jointly, then we have the second option of invoking the one-House veto. So the President is protected, we are protected.

I think the safeguards are more than adequate.

Q Senator, is the understanding that the Soviet authorities would make no difference to which country a person wants to emigrate?

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SENATOR JACKSON: Absolutely. It is just the rate of emmigration, and it is without regard, as I point out in my statement, to race or national origin or creed or whatever. So that has nothing to do with it at all, and it does not apply to any religious group. It applies to all.

Q Senator Jackson, we know that Secretary Kissinger and then President Nixon discussed this situation during the last summit talks. Do you know if that was the first time that a specific proposal was put forward, or does the development of this agreement go back further than that?

SENATOR JACKSON: I think it goes back two years, really. It goes back that long. When the first talks occurred between the President and the Secretary of State and the Soviet officials.

Q Scoop, can I ask Congressman Vanik what the timetable is?

Q Senator Jackson, I am sure this is probably a question for the Russians, but how soon do you think the first wave of immigrants will emmigrate from the Soviet Union.

SENATOR JACKSON: That depends on when the trade bill will be passed, and we expect it will be first priority, as I understand it, out of the finance committee and they are just waiting to act, so I suspect it will be up early and that the trade bill should be signed into law sometime in December.

CONGRESSMAN VANIK: And the Senate will act first.

SENATOR JACKSON: We will act first and then it will have to go to conference. Congressman Vanik will be a conferee.

Q But you expect to get it out this year after you come back?

SENATOR JACKSON: We would anticipate that the Senate will pass a trade bill.

Q Senator, most people are talking about this bill as affecting the Soviet Jews. Are you saying it doesn't just affect the Soviet Jews?

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SENATOR JACKSON: It does not. There is no reference in any of these documents to the religion or origin of any person. It applies to all.

Of course the other countries will have to work out similar arrangements, depending on their own situation, with the President and the Secretary of State in order to obtain the waiver.

So we are dealing only here with the Soviet Union, but the authority extends to all non-market countries.

Q Scoop, what about with China, for instance? Now will China be immediately eligible, or will there have to be a special deal worked out?

SENATOR JACKSON: All countries will have to go through the procedure. That is all non-market countries and, other than Poland, which already is covered, and Yugoslavia with MFN agreements, there will need to be agreements worked out with the other non-market countries.

Q Similar to the exchange of letters you have?

SENATOR JACKSON: I don't know how it will be handled, but the point is that the President will have to make the findings, and we did not work that out.

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Q This does not mention Jews, of course --

SENATOR JACKSON: Of course not.

Q -- but in the discussions between the President and the Secretary of State and the Russians, does that restrict it to the Jews?

SENATOR JACKSON: Not to my knowledge, no. I, of course, was not present. . Senator Javits has no such knowledge. I have no such knowledge to that effect. Of course, Alexander Solzhenitsyn is a Gentile, and he is one of the dramatic examples. The man that jumped ship, you will recall, a Latvian, is on his way over -- Lithuanian, I believe, who turned out to be an American citizen, a Gentile, and of course Sakharov, who has been leading this fight is a Gentile.

So, it is very, very clear here that this is not based on national origin, race, religion or whatever.

Q But the figure 60,000 applies to Jews.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, it doesn't, I want to emphasize that. The Jews are better organized as a group and so obviously they have been in the forefront because they have faced the severest persecution.

Others have been persecuted, too, I would point out. There are various nationality groups, ethnic Germans, Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, the list is long.

Well, the Jews had their applications in early. Of course, they took the early initiative on this, and the key thing is that the understanding provides that the applications shall be processed in order received, and that, I think, is a significant development along with the other provisions.

Q What is the real breakthrough, Senator, give us a little history of this.

SENATOR JACKSON: I think the real breakthrough started, Senator Javits, with the breakfast with President Ford, the first breakfast that he had in the White House shortly after he became President, it was in August, wasn't it?

Q August 15.

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SENATOR JACKSON: Whatever the date is, you check that. That was the first meeting we had with President Ford, and I would say that was the beginning of a real breakthrough on the basis of an overall understanding of what we were seeking to accomplish and that was contrary, I think, to all expectations before because the statement was made over and over again, we are interfering in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union and, of course, we took the opposite position.

Q Are you saying, Senator, President Ford introduced a new element in this that was lacking under President Nixon?

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, we met with President Nixon only, as I recall, it was a year ago last April, once. President Ford has been involved in virtually all of the meetings since he took office and has taken a deep personal interest, and that is why I want to emphasize the strong bipartisan flavor of this. I think this is the first major accomplishment in the Ford Administration area bipartisanship in foreign policy, specifically, human rights.

In addition, I think it is a monumental accomplishment considering the fact so many said it ~~could never be accomplished.~~

Q Senator Jackson, what you are saying indicates that the change was on the part of this country rather than the Soviets, and that this could have perhaps been acquired two years ago?

SENATOR JACKSON: Let me just say that what we started out with two years ago we have accomplished. I am not going to comment on what the Russians have done. I can only say that there has been a complete turn around here on the basic points that are contained in the two letters.

There is some give and some take on both sides, but the fundamental principles that were embodied in the Jackson-Vanik-Mills amendment have been achieved as a result of our agreement today.

Q What about the hardship cases and the prisoners of conscience?

SENATOR JACKSON: We have covered hardship cases in the letters. You will find that in there.

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Q And what about the prisoners of conscience?

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, they are covered, too. They are under a hardship.

Q Has the Congress ever legislated before in terms of another country, ever in the history of Congress?

SENATOR JACKSON: Yes, I think this is unique in that respect, but we purposely avoided any negotiations with the Russians. We have dealt directly with the Administration. You know, there is a Logan Act that was passed -- I am just kidding -- but no one has ever enforced it. It was passed right after the founding of the Republic.

But I don't think it is appropriate. I believe we should to the extent possible, when we reach an accord, speak with one voice, and we worked through the President and the Secretary of State, and this is the way it should be under all Administrations.

Q Senator, there are three countries -- Poland, Yugoslavia and Rumania -- which have been getting Ex-Im bank credits. Will they have to renegotiate in order to continue getting those credits?

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, Rumania doesn't have MFN.

Q But they have the credits.

SENATOR JACKSON: All countries would be affected by the credits; credits apply to all countries.

Q Is there any understanding as to how much the Russians will get in the next 18 months?

SENATOR JACKSON: No, we have had no understanding. As you know, that is covered by legislation that is pending to extend the provisions of the Export-Import Bank.

Q That depends on the Ex-Im bank authority extention?

SENATOR JACKSON: No, the Ex-Im bank --

Q I am speaking of credits?

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SENATOR JACKSON: Credits. There are two separate things. The amendment that we have been discussing this morning runs to two things -- most favored nation treatment and credits. Yugoslavia and Poland have already been granted MFN. Rumania has sought it, but has not received it and legislation has been pending in that regard.

As to credits, the authority to extend Export-Import Bank loans will expire on November 30. It is just a simple ~~extension~~. And there are various proposed safeguards pending on what authority they can act and so on. So, that is a separate matter and a separate issue.

Q But your amendment, or the equivalent, is not on that, not on the Ex-Im bank?

SENATOR JACKSON: No, the amendment only applies to the trade bill.

Thank you very much.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 11:14 A.M. EDT)